

Fake News Sites Promote Fake Health Products

Scammers will do just about anything to rip you off. They will create fake websites, use fake endorsements from public figures, lie about the effectiveness of their products, and much more. Recently, shady companies selling “brain booster” pills and assorted remedies to fight dementia and other health conditions are using these tactics to promote their products.

First, these con artists build spoofed websites that look like the news sites that we know and trust. The sites aren’t real news sites and the endorsements featured on the sites - often from reputable scientists or well-known journalists - are fake.

The spoofed news sites link you to the sales page for the product, which allows you to place an order with a credit or debit card. The scammers may claim that the pills are “proven” to work. For example, they may claim that you’ll experience an increase in concentration and memory recall by large percentages. But, the sites lack evidence to support their claims. It’s a scam.

The National Institute of Health advises that you talk to your doctor to get the facts about health products before purchasing.

If you already paid money to a scammer, you may still be able to get your money back.

- If you paid by credit card, call the card company immediately using the phone number found on your monthly statement. Alert them to the fraudulent charge and request that it be removed from your bill. Also ask if you should get a new card with a new number to prevent more fraudulent charges.
- While debit cards don’t provide the same protections from fraudulent charges as credit cards, many debit card companies will voluntarily try to assist you. Contact the card company immediately and ask if you are eligible to get your money back and what you can do to limit your exposure to additional charges.

The Office of Consumer Protection handles hundreds of complaints each year involving automotive sales and repairs, new home purchases, home improvements, credit issues, retail sales, internet services and most other consumer transactions. OCP provides pre-purchase information to consumers, as well as speakers to the community on consumer issues.

To obtain this factsheet in an alternative format, call the Office of Consumer Protection at 410-313-6420 (voice/relay) or email us at consumer@howardcountymd.gov.